



## POLICY BRIEFING SERIES

### WORK-FAMILY INFORMATION FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

SUPPORTED BY: THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

2005, ISSUE 3  
UPDATED 2009

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

#### TELEWORK AND TELECOMMUTING

- WHY IS TELECOMMUTING A POLICY MATTER?
- WHO HAS ACCESS TO TELEWORK?
- HOW DOES THE AVAILABILITY OF TELEWORK OPTIONS AFFECT WORKING FAMILIES?
- HOW DOES TELECOMMUTING AFFECT BUSINESSES?
- HOW DOES TELECOMMUTING AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT?
- WHAT CAN BE DONE?

COMMENTS BY: REPRESENTATIVE ERIK HELLAND (R-IA)



SLOAN WORK AND FAMILY  
RESEARCH NETWORK  
BOSTON COLLEGE

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OR TO BECOME AN AFFILIATE,  
PLEASE VISIT [WWW.BC.EDU/WFNETWORK](http://WWW.BC.EDU/WFNETWORK)

## POLICY BRIEFING SERIES

## WORK-FAMILY INFORMATION FOR STATE LEGISLATORS

SUPPORTED BY: THE ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION



CREATED BY:

SLOAN WORK AND FAMILY  
RESEARCH NETWORK  
BOSTON COLLEGE

Prepared by: Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes, PhD; Judi Casey, MSW; Sandee Shulkin, MSW  
Updated 2009: Julie Weber, JD; Mary Curlew, MSW

WWW.BC.EDU/WFNETWORK

## TELEWORK AND TELECOMMUTING

*"Telecommuting can save employees time while saving companies money."*<sup>1</sup>

Decades ago, futurists predicted that advances in technology would revolutionize the way we work. And they were right.

Telework allows employees to work from off-site locations and to keep in touch with supervisors and coworkers through the use of computers, telephones, and other communications equipment. Telecommuting can include working from home, without any commute at all. In this report, we address the issue of telework in general, including telecommuting arrangements.

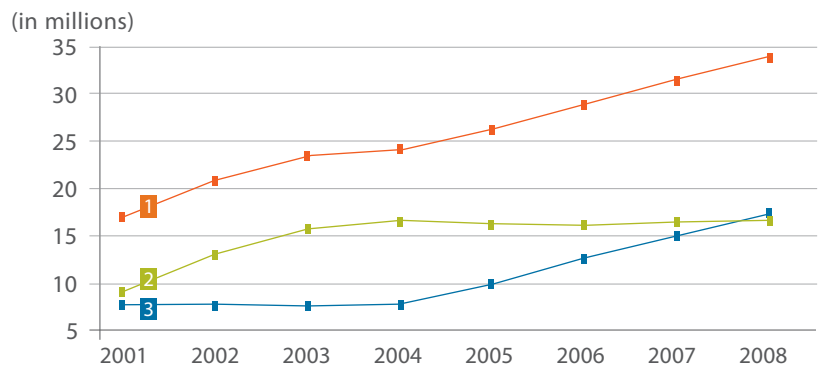
Most employees who telework work off-site for just some of their workweek; however, some people telework on a full-time basis.

Over the past 15 years, the number of employees who telework has more than doubled. One recent survey found that more than 33.7 million U.S. workers telework at least 1 day per month.<sup>2</sup>

## Eight-Year Teleworker Trend Line

This chart represents the number of U.S. teleworkers who have worked remotely at least 1 day per month from the years 2001 to 2008. Since 2003, the total number of U.S. once-a-month teleworkers has risen by roughly 43%.

- 1 "Total teleworkers" at least 1 day per month (millions)
- 2 "Contract teleworker" at least 1 day per month (millions)
- 3 "Employee teleworker" at least 1 day per month (millions)



Note: "Employee telecommuter" is a full- or part-time employee who works remotely at least one day per month. A "contract telecommuter" is a self-employed individual who works remotely at least one day per month. Data for 2007 are estimates only; the survey was not conducted in 2007.

Chart source: WorldatWork Telework Trendlines™ 2009 commissioned from The Dieringer Research Group

## WHY IS TELECOMMUTING A POLICY MATTER?

Many states allow employers to include telecommuting programs as one of their strategies for meeting EPA guidelines or for expanding the available workforce to include disabled employees, employees who have long commutes, or employees with dependent-care needs.

- Employers might be more likely to adopt policies on telecommuting if state laws rewarded them for doing so.
- States could provide technical assistance for setting up home offices.
- State legislators can support bills that would increase telecommuting options for public-sector employees.

TELECOMMUTING IS A WIN-WIN FOR BUSINESSES, EMPLOYEES, AND FAMILIES. IT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT FOR SMALLER, RURAL COMMUNITIES TO DRIVE LARGE-SCALE ECONOMIC GROWTH RESULTING IN BRICK-AND-MORTAR ESTABLISHMENTS FILLED WITH GOOD-PAYING JOBS. TELECOMMUTING ALLOWS THE EMPLOYEES TO "GO TO WORK" EVEN IF THEY ARE SCORES OF MILES FROM THE OFFICE. THIS MAKES IT EASIER FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES TO ATTRACT GOOD-PAYING JOBS WITHOUT HEAVY INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT. FINALLY, FOR BUSY PARENTS, MAXIMIZING THEIR TIME SPENT AT HOME BENEFITS THEIR FAMILIES.

REPRESENTATIVE ERIK HELLAND (R-IA) CONCERNING HIS TELEWORK AND TELECOMMUTING BILL, HF 718



## WHO HAS ACCESS TO TELEWORK?

---

Telework is becoming more common across the labor force, but white-collar upper-income professions are more likely to be working outside of the office than lower-income workers who may have more need for alternate work options.

- According to a 2008 national survey, private-sector employers have taken significant steps to expand telework initiatives, and private-sector telework adoption is approaching the federal level, with 14% of private-sector employees teleworking, compared to 17% of federal employees.<sup>3</sup>
- According to the National Study of the Changing Workforce, “Employees in managerial and professional occupations are much more likely (62%) than employees in other occupations (22%) to use a computer at home for job-related work.”<sup>4</sup>
- One recent survey demonstrates that 3 out of 5 regular employee teleworkers are male, 52% live in households earning at least \$75,000 a year, and most are college graduates.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW DOES THE AVAILABILITY OF TELEWORK OPTIONS AFFECT WORKING FAMILIES?

---

Studies have shown that teleworking can be beneficial for employees and their families.

- “Employees in all work-from-home arrangements report less emotional and physical fatigue than on-site workers.”<sup>5</sup>
- “Remote workers (54%) and regular teleworkers (45%) are the most satisfied with their work arrangements; about half of them report they are ‘very satisfied’.”<sup>5</sup>
- Telework arrangements can help people with short-term and permanent health conditions to remain in the labor force. “Telework arrangements support employees who need a reasonable accommodation for a disability or have a temporary health problem. In 2002, there were 1,749 employees who fell into these two categories. In 2003 that number grew to 3,849 (an increase of more than 120%).”<sup>5</sup>
- With the surge in gas prices, workers who telecommute can also benefit from cutting their commuting costs.
- Telework can also help the majority of workers, many of whom have dependents, with their dependent care responsibilities, such as taking children to doctors’ appointments, keeping a disabled spouse on a regular medication routine, or providing a presence for an elder.<sup>6</sup>

## HOW DOES TELECOMMUTING AFFECT BUSINESSES?

---

Employers who offer telecommuting often find that there are business benefits.

- “Telecommuting reduces turnover by 20% on average, boosts productivity up to 22% and trims absenteeism by nearly 60%.”<sup>7</sup>
  - » Case example: Cisco recently announced that it generated an estimated annual savings of \$277 million in productivity by allowing employees to telework.<sup>8</sup>
- Telecommuting can help employers retain valued employees who have long commutes. In a 2008 national survey, 50% of Federal employees and 40% of private-sector employees said that the option to telework would influence their decision to remain with their employer or take a new job.<sup>3</sup>
- Businesses may find they save operating costs when telecommuters use their own space, electricity, and heating/air conditioning to work from their homes. Case example: IBM Canada currently saves \$20 million in operating costs annually and over 500,000 square feet of real estate with its telework program.<sup>1</sup>
- Telecommuting can ensure continuity of business operations in the aftermath of a major catastrophe or disruptive event, such as a snowstorm or tornado.<sup>3</sup>
- Telecommuting enables businesses to earn tax credits for reducing pollution and traffic congestion.

## HOW DOES TELECOMMUTING AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT?

---

Where telecommuting reduces car usage, it can contribute to reductions in vehicle emissions, traffic congestion, and pollution.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

---

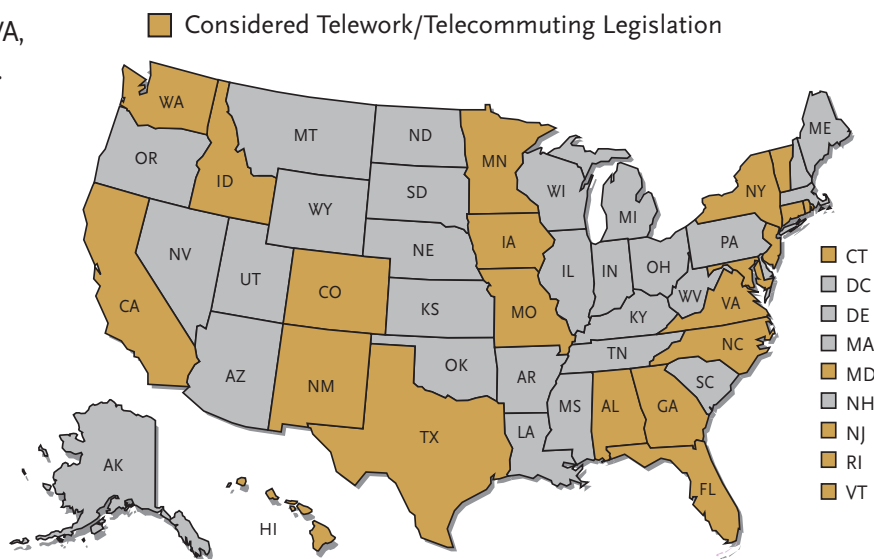
To date, 22 states have passed telework legislation. State policies include:

- Four states (CA, NJ, RI, VA) have statutes expressly establishing commissions to encourage telecommuting.
- Thirteen states (AZ, CA, CO, CT, IL, MD, MN, NJ, NY, RI, TX, VA, WA) have statutes implementing telecommuting as a solution for environmental concerns or traffic congestion.
- Twelve states (CA, CT, FL, GA, MN, MT, NC, OR, RI, SC, VA, WA) have statutes encouraging telecommuting policies within state agencies.
- Five states (AZ, ID, IL, VA, WA) have statutes encouraging private employers to implement telecommuting programs for their employees.

- Three states (AZ, CA, WA) have statutes which give incentives or reimbursement to employees participating in telecommuting.
- Three states (FL, MS, VA) offer telecommuting as part of a vocational rehabilitation program for disabled employees.
- Two states (MO, VA) have statutes connecting telecommuting to family needs and dependent care.
- Three states (CA, SC, VA) have statutes connecting employee productivity and efficiency to telecommuting.
- Three states (CA, CO, CT) have statutes connecting programs to “better quality of life.”

### STATES IN THE 2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION THAT CONSIDERED TELEWORK/TELECOMMUTING LEGISLATION

- Twelve states (CO, CT, GA, HI, IA, ID, MN, NJ, NY, TX, VA, WA) proposed legislation relating to telecommuting.
- Two states (ID, CO) proposed resolutions to encourage telecommuting within the state.
- Four states (HI, NY, VA, WA) proposed five bills establishing a task force or requiring analysis of telework options.
- Five states (CT, HI, NY, VA, WA) sought to pass six bills linking telecommuting to environmental protection and decrease of traffic congestion.
- Five states (CT, MN, NJ, NY, VA) sought to pass five bills concerning implementation of telework programs in state agencies.
- Eight states (GA, HI, IA, MN, NJ, NY, TX, VA) proposed eight bills giving a tax credit to employers or individuals that participate in telework arrangements.



For more bills and statutes, visit [wfnetwork.bc.edu/bills.php](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/bills.php)

### WOULD YOU LIKE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT TELECOMMUTING?

- The Telework Coalition: [www.telcoa.org](http://www.telcoa.org)  
*This site includes a calendar of upcoming events, conferences and trainings as well as information about federal, state, and regional telework legislation.*
- Interagency Telework Site: [www.telework.gov](http://www.telework.gov)  
*Designed for employees, managers, and supervisors, this website is a collaboration of the Office of Personnel Management and the U.S. General Services Administration. To download the telework manual, "Telework: A Management Priority. A Guide for Managers, Supervisors, and Telework Coordinators": [www.telework.gov/documents/tw\\_man03/index.asp](http://www.telework.gov/documents/tw_man03/index.asp)*
- Telework.gov: [www.telework.gov/guidance\\_and\\_legislation/index.aspx](http://www.telework.gov/guidance_and_legislation/index.aspx)  
*The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the General Services Administration (GSA) have established this interagency website to provide easy access to information about telework in the Federal Government.*

#### Sources cited in this Policy Briefing Series

- Colman, R. (2004). Telecommuting transitions. *CMA Management*, 78(5), 23-28.
- WorldatWork and The Dieringer Research Group. (2009). *Telework Trendlines 2009* [Survey brief]. Scottsdale, AZ and Brookfield, WI: Authors. Retrieved from [http://www.workingfromanywhere.org/news/Trendlines\\_2009.pdf](http://www.workingfromanywhere.org/news/Trendlines_2009.pdf)
- CDW-G. (2008). 2008 CDW-G telework report. Retrieved from <http://newsroom.cdwg.com/features/feature-03-31-08.html>
- Bond, J. T., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E., Protts, D. (2002). *Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce* (No. 3). New York, NY: Families and Work Institute.
- Richman, A., Noble, K., & Johnson, A. (2002). *When the workplace is many places: The extent and nature of off-site work today*. Watertown, MA: WFD Consulting Inc.
- GSA. (2005). *Is standard practice best practice? Emerging perspective on telework and dependent care*. Retrieved from <http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/ogp/teleworkdepcarefinalfullwebversionreport.doc>
- International Telework Association & Council. (2001, August). Telecommuting is a flop, so fix it already. *Ziff Davis Smart Business*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from [www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_zdzbj/is\\_200108/ai\\_ziff6725](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_zdzbj/is_200108/ai_ziff6725)
- Cisco. (2009, June 25). *Cisco study finds telecommuting significantly increases employee productivity, work-life flexibility and job satisfaction: Increased productivity due to telecommuting generates an estimated \$277 million in annual savings for company* [Press release]. San Jose, CA: Author. Retrieved from [http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/2009/prod\\_062609.html](http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/2009/prod_062609.html)

To view additional issues of the Policy Briefing Series, including Phased Retirement and Flexible Work Schedules, please visit: [wfnetwork.bc.edu/policy.php](http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/policy.php)

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network can provide you with additional research-based information about working families.

PLEASE VISIT [WWW.BC.EDU/WFNETWORK](http://WWW.BC.EDU/WFNETWORK), EMAIL [WFNETWORK@BC.EDU](mailto:WFNETWORK@BC.EDU), OR CALL 617.552.1708.